

A Day in the Life of the Mackinac Bridge

Bridge Crews Operate Around the Clock

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him from the bridge deck, and when the sanding is completed later in the day, Mr. Goetz will climb into the protective suit and sky climber and begin priming and painting in the bridge's traditional ivory color.

On the opposite side of the bridge deck and near the south tower, another maintenance project is underway. Todd Mayer and Larry Antkowiack look like spacemen, too, as they sand the steel pipe rail on the outside edge of the roadway. The rail serves as a bumper for vehicles, and it, too, will be primed and painted.

When the time comes to paint the cables, the painters will wear gloves that they dip in paint. Wiping the cable with a paint-soaked glove allows the paint to soak between the cable wires.

Cables used to be painted by a man standing in a barrel, Mr. Sweeney said. The barrel would be tilted as the painter leaned out to paint the cables.

Charlie Harrington is the pot tender this day, regulating the sand and air pressure at the equipment truck for the sand-blasting.

Plywood is set up between the pipe rail and the catwalk to protect the outer green painted areas from the sanding. To get the rail completely sanded, the two men work in unusual positions. To remove rust underneath, they lie down on the road. Removing rust on the water side of the pipe rail requires they bend at the waist with their heads upside-down.

Sanding also requires arm strength to control 120 pounds of

pressure in the sanding hoses.

"That's a physically demanding job, right there," said Mr. Visnaw, "if you do that 10 hours a day, or even for eight hours."

On this day, the men will work 10 hours.

"When we have good weather and low traffic, we put in the hours," noted Mr. Johnson.

Before he begins suiting, Mr. Mayer prepares for the strenuous work by stretching his leg muscles. He uses techniques similar

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At right: Steve Campbell (left) and Stanley Wekwert, on the Mackinac Bridge deck, assist crew member Greg Goetz, who is in the spider climber and preparing to paint the north face of the north tower.



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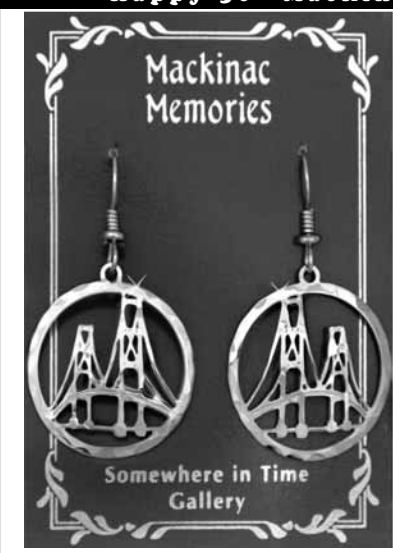
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